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PERS 73-2397

10 MAY 1973

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Secretary, CIA Management  
Committee

SUBJECT : Reverse Fitness Reports

REFERENCE : Memo fr Junior Officers' Study Group  
dated 13 April 73, same subject

1. This is in response to your request for comment on the referent which urges that the Agency consider systems for evaluations of managers by their professional and clerical subordinates and evaluations by their fellow workers of all employees under consideration for managerial positions.

2. The proposal seems to be based on the Study Group's concern with an apparent lack of attention to the quality of management and supervision. Since members of the Group are exposed to management practices throughout the Agency, it can be presumed that they consider the problem a general one. The Study Group's observations ring true that "in most cases the branch chief enjoys autonomy as long as the division chief is pleased with the staff's performance" and "... subordinates are reluctant to complain through normal channels for fear of reprisals . . . ."

3. The idea of "reverse" evaluations is not new. From time to time circumstances emerge which make it desirable for management to tap the opinions and attitudes of subordinates toward their superiors or, as in training situations, to solicit peer comments on the leadership potential of fellow trainees. However, our recent review of the literature in this field shows that the systematic practice of such actions on a regular formal basis is indeed rare.

4. In paragraph 6 the referent notes a few of the difficulties in implementing the proposed evaluations. There are many others which the Agency would also have to resolve if it were to consider seriously such action. For example:

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a. Although standards can be established (either by direction or through participative development of objectives) against which individual performance can be evaluated, there is no way for subordinates to establish measurable standards of conduct and productivity for their superiors. By virtue of their positions, these superiors are accountable to higher levels of management for the individual and collective productivity of the employees whom they supervise.

b. The difficulties in having supervisors submit objective evaluations of the performance of their subordinates are well known. Due to the greater possibility of reprisals, it would be far more difficult for subordinates to be objective in recording evaluations of their superiors. Necessarily, the human factors involved would tend to make reverse evaluations even less reliable than those which supervisors record on employees under our present system. It would also be next to impossible to preserve the anonymity of reverse evaluations if it were decided to solicit them on that basis.

c. Management would be unable to assess the influence of personality factors in reverse evaluations. Employees would be inclined to evaluate their supervisors' behavior in terms of their personal preferences, which might not match management's objectives. Further, such preferences would not necessarily relate to the style of supervision which would be best suited to productive activity in a given work situation.

5. We agree with the Study Group that the Agency should identify and correct deficiencies in supervisory and managerial performance. However, the process of reorienting the Agency's ingrained managerial style will be difficult and time-consuming. Significant change in this area can come about only through conscious intelligent effort to develop a more open managerial style which can accept legitimate confrontation and which will encourage working groups to exercise individual initiative in defining and pursuing their objectives within Agency goals.

6. We do not believe that the introduction of a formal program of peer evaluation or reverse fitness reports would significantly improve the management practices which concern the Junior Officer Study Group.

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In our opinion, such programs would only stimulate resentment and mistrust in the managerial hierarchy. They would strengthen resistance to change and retard progress toward the improvements which the Study Group is seeking.

/s/Harry B. Fisher  
Harry B. Fisher  
Director of Personnel

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13 April 1973

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Reverse Fitness Reports

FROM: The Junior Officers' Study Group\*

1. Since its inception, the CIA has viewed evaluation as something superiors do to subordinates. This memorandum outlines the need for evaluation of managerial performance and potential by subordinates and fellow workers. Such evaluation would supplement present procedures. We feel that this approach would be particularly valuable at this time, when the Agency is scrutinizing the performance of employees at all levels. For brevity's sake, we concentrate on evaluation of first-line managers--usually branch chiefs. In the broadest context, however, we believe all employees could evaluate their immediate supervisor.

2. The CIA has tended to reward those who have highly developed substantive or operational capabilities with supervisory positions whether or not they have an aptitude for management. The limited alternatives for rewarding substantive competence has meant that capable professionals must move into staff or supervisory slots in order to advance. Their ability to motivate and train others is often a secondary consideration. Too frequently they make poor managers and, at the same time, no longer have time for substantive work.

\*An Annex describing the Group and listing previous memoranda is attached.

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3. The system functions, but the Agency employs many ineffective managers:

- who fail to maintain substantive command of the data for which the branch is responsible;
- who tightly control the flow of data, rigidly imposing a branch position and refusing to allow constructive dissent;
- who exploit subordinates as research assistants and fail to delegate responsibility;
- who fail to take an interest in the careers of subordinates;
- who fail to understand how to motivate people.

At present, there is no accepted, efficient way of correcting or replacing such managers. In most cases, the branch chief enjoys autonomy as long as the division chief is pleased with the staff's performance. Our study on grievance procedures has shown that subordinates are reluctant to complain through normal channels for fear of reprisal, but discontent exists and ultimately can affect production.

4. Reverse fitness reports would enable branch chiefs to learn what their subordinates think of their performance and would enable division chiefs to assess more accurately the leadership ability of the branch chiefs. We are not, of course, suggesting that this would be the only input in judging a branch chief's performance--simply that this is a significant input ignored by the current system.

5. Similar considerations apply to lateral evaluation of individuals at pre-managerial grade levels--usually GS-13--by their immediate fellow workers of all grade levels. Colleagues can often assess more accurately than can a branch or division chief whether or not an individual would be able to mobilize the efforts of subordinates. Such evaluation would also signal to higher levels of management if an individual is considered particularly unsuited for a supervisory role by close colleagues.

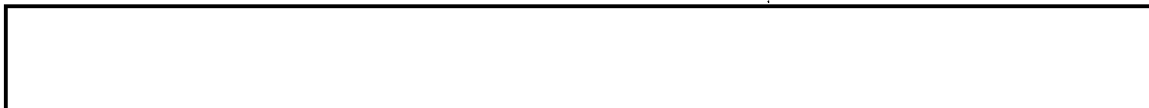
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6. Although we are not offering a specific format for reverse fitness reports, we have discussed the advantages and hazards of a variety of procedures.

- If the reports are sent only to the manager's superior, they may be ignored if they refute the superior's assessment.
- If the evaluation is anonymous, it is difficult to assess the objectivity of the subordinate.
- If the evaluation is not anonymous, subordinates may not feel free to express their true feelings.

7. We urge the CIA to consider the evaluation of managers by their professional and clerical subordinates and evaluation by their fellow workers of all employees who are being considered for managerial positions. To accomplish this, the Agency should:

- provide evaluation guidelines for each component;
- send signed copies of reverse fitness reports to the manager's supervisor, who would be required to use them in preparation of the manager's fitness report after consultation with the manager;
- send copies to career development officers in the front office of the component to be used when the manager is being considered for promotion or rotation;
- consider reverse fitness reports as a pilot project along with wider application of the new fitness report formats under consideration in several offices;
- require greater discussion between supervisors and subordinates of the strengths and weaknesses of each and how their working relationship can be improved.



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## ANNEX

1. The Junior Officers' Study Group is composed of individuals from various components who meet weekly on their time to discuss issues of general concern about management of the CIA. The Group makes no claim to represent the view of all junior officers. Occasionally, however, individual memoranda include results of an informal survey of a cross section of Agency employees. The Group was formed by three junior officers who were stimulated by an Agency panel discussion on 11 February 1971 about the CIA and American youth. At present, there are about a dozen members from several components. The membership fluctuates and not all members choose to support each project.

2. The following memoranda have been produced and disseminated to various levels of Agency management:

-- An Informal Junior Officers' Study Group (our original announcement)	12 March 1971
-- Some Suggestions for the DCI's Speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors	2 April 1971
-- Black Employment at the CIA	29 June 1971
-- The Selling of Intelligence	5 August 1971
-- A Day Care Center for the CIA	5 January 1972
-- <u>Studies in Intelligence</u>	26 January 1972
-- A Few Issues Worth Discussing at the Senior Seminar	March 1972
-- A Response to <u>Facts About CIA</u>	22 March 1972
-- Travel	27 April 1972
-- The Status of Secretaries	16 August 1972
-- Grievance Procedure	24 January 1973
-- Reverse Fitness Reports (attached)	13 April 1973



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